

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice CRP-338

For: State Offices and Service Centers

**Clarifying CP15A, Establishment of Permanent
Vegetative Cover (Contour Grass Strips) Noneasement**

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A

Background

Reports and audits have indicated that some State Offices and Service Centers may be misunderstanding or misapplying continuous signup CP15A. In addition, recent State- and county-level publications have provided incorrect and misleading information about CP15A.

B

Purpose

This notice provides clarification about:

- continuous signup provisions
- procedure and practice standards for CP15A.

2 Clarifying Continuous Signup Provisions

A

**General
Information**

Continuous signup was established to provide producers and landowners with management flexibility when planning conservation systems to their farming operations to address specific resources concerns. The practices available under the continuous signup provide high environmental benefits such as enhanced water quality, reduced wind and water erosion, control runoff, snow management, and reduce sedimentation. Although the practices and acreage enrolled under the continuous signup are generally small areas, the benefits obtained generally impact a much larger area.

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Disposal Date	Distribution
June 1, 1999	State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers and NRCS State Offices; FS, 80; CSREES, 5

2 Clarifying Continuous Signup Provisions (Continued)

A

General Information (Continued)

Acreage offered in the continuous signup is automatically eligible for enrollment if all eligibility requirements are met, according to 2-CRP, Part 5. The competitive nature of the general CRP signup does not apply to continuous signup. To be eligible for enrollment in the continuous signup the practice must address a specific resource concern and NRCS must determine that the practice will solve the resource problem. In addition, the purpose of the practice, according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 9, must be met.

3 Clarifying CP15A

A

Purpose of CP15A

The purpose of contour grass strips is to establish a permanent vegetative cover following the contour on eligible cropland that will reduce erosion and control runoff.

Recent State- and county-level publications have been distributed in some States that indicate acreage devoted to CP15A may be enrolled under the continuous signup for purposes other than reducing erosion and controlling runoff. These publications contain incorrect and misleading information about the eligibility of contour grass strips for CRP.

Land shall **not** be enrolled in CRP to be devoted to CP15A unless a contour grass strip is needed to reduce erosion or control runoff. The practice may provide other secondary benefits such as crop sheltering, increased yields, and wildlife habitat. However, land shall not be enrolled in CRP to be devoted to CP15A for any purpose other than to solve the resource concern of erosion and runoff control.

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3 Clarifying CP15A (Continued)

B **CP15A and** **Terraces**

Recent State- and county-level publications have indicated that contour grass strips may be installed on terraces to reduce the maintenance of the terrace. The purpose of contour grass strips is to solve the resource concern of **erosion and runoff**.

Installing contour grass strips on the terraces does not meet the purpose of the practice. Accordingly, terraces are not eligible to be enrolled in CRP to be devoted to CP15A. However, contour grass strips may be used in conjunction with terraces as an overall conservation management system (contour grass strips installed between terraces) to control erosion and runoff on eligible land.

Example: An eligible field has an existing terrace system to address conservation compliance. However, the level of erosion in the field still exceeds “T.” Installing contour grass strips between the existing terraces would reduce erosion and control runoff on the field. Contour grass strips may be installed in the field **between** the existing terraces as part of the overall plan to address the erosion problem.

C **Wider Cultivated** **Strips**

Recent reports and audits have indicated that over 80 percent of some fields have been enrolled under the continuous signup as CP15A with no cultivation being conducted in the field. This enrollment meets neither the purpose of the practice nor the practice standard.

To be eligible for enrollment, contour grass strips must be alternated with wider cropped strips. The grade of the cropped strips shall be aligned as closely as possible to the contour to achieve the greatest erosion reduction possible. The grass strips are not part of the normal crop rotation.

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3 Clarifying CP15A (Continued)

D CP15A Requirements

Contour grass strips:

- must be for the purpose of erosion and runoff control
- must be alternated with **wider** cultivated strips that are farmed on a contour

Note: Width requirements are provided in 2-CRP, Exhibit 9.

- are **not** eligible to be installed on terraces

Note: Contour grass strips may be installed between terraces when needed to control erosion and runoff.

- must meet NRCS practice standards and all the requirements provided in 2-CRP, Exhibit 9.

COC's shall not approve any CRP-1 for CP15A that:

- **is for any purpose other than reducing erosion and controlling runoff**
- **does not meet all the requirements of 2-CRP**
- **is not alternated with wider cultivated strips**
- **will be installed on terraces.**

Reports will be developed to monitor the enrollment of land in the continuous signup to provide a tool to be used by FSA, NRCS, and OIG to ensure that the provisions of the continuous signup are not misapplied.

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4 Action

A

State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- immediately provide a copy of this notice to the NRCS State Office
 - immediately provide a copy of this notice to Service Centers
 - ensure that Service Centers:
 - understand the purpose of continuous signup practices
 - do not approve any CRP-1 for any practice that does not meet the requirements of the practice, including the purpose and size, according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 9
 - are aware of incorrect and misleading publications, when known.
-

B

Service Center Action

FSA Service Centers shall:

- immediately provide a copy of this notice to the local NRCS Field Office
 - not approve any CRP-1 for any practice that does not meet the requirements of the practice, including the purpose and size, according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 9
 - immediately inform State Office of any incorrect or misleading publications.
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4 Action (Continued)

C

NRCS State Office Action

State NRCS Offices shall:

- ensure that NRCS Field Offices ensure that all CRP practices meet the requirements of the practice, including the purpose and size, according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 9
 - inform NRCS Field Offices of incorrect and misleading publications, when known.
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D

NRCS Field Office Action

NRCS Field Offices shall:

- ensure that all CRP practices meet the requirements of the practice, including the purpose and size, according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 9
 - immediately correct any misleading publications about the eligibility and purpose of CP15A.
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E

NRCS National Office Concurrence

NRCS has concurred with this notice.
